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Letter dated 16 June 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, has submitted to me the eighth annual report on the Alliance of Civilizations, highlighting its main activities from July 2014 to December 2015 in accordance with the strategic review document for 2013-2018.

I am pleased to learn that more partners are supporting the Alliance and I hope that Member States of the Group of Friends of the Alliance will regularly support it to the fullest extent possible, including through contributions to the Voluntary Trust Fund. Only through predictable and sufficient contributions to the Trust Fund can the Alliance continue its important work.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present report to the attention of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

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Please recycle

Alliance of Civilizations: eighth annual report of the High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations

Summary

The present report highlights the main activities carried out by the Alliance of Civilizations, under the leadership of the High Representative, between July 2014 and December 2015. These activities were developed in accordance with the strategic review document for 2013-2018, submitted to the Secretary-General in June 2013.

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I. Introduction

1. The Alliance of Civilizations, a political initiative of the Secretary-General, was launched in 2005 with the co-sponsorship of the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey. The first High Representative of the Alliance of Civilizations, Jorge Sampaio, former President of Portugal, was appointed in May 2007.

2. In February 2013, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session and former Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations, became the second High Representative. Mr. Al-Nasser submitted the Alliance's strategic review document for 2013-2018, which was approved by the Secretary-General and endorsed by the Group of Friends in September 2013.

3. In accordance with the strategic review document for 2013-2018, the programming and activities of the Alliance have been focused on its four pillars, namely, youth, education, media and migration. All the activities focus on promoting intercultural and interfaith dialogue, understanding and cooperation among people and communities around the world.

4. The work of the Alliance of Civilizations does not stop there. Its significance is wider, given that it contributes to the efforts of the United Nations in many areas, including terrorism and sustainable development. Through its programming and activities, the Alliance contributes to the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and serves as a soft diplomacy tool and a platform for sharing good practices and ideas.

5. The Alliance seeks to advance shared humanistic values that contribute to a culture of peace and tolerance among all people. It would not be possible to achieve that goal without the support and cooperation of partners, including Member States, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society. The Alliance pursues its goals by empowering non-State actors at the local level who share its values and goals and who undertake actions in line with the objectives, rules and policies of the United Nations.

6. Cooperation and partnerships with Member States and the various entities of the United Nations are also crucial to advance the work of the Alliance. On 6 July 2015, the General Assembly adopted its resolution 69/312 entitled "United Nations Alliance of Civilizations", with Spain and Turkey as the main sponsors, providing the Alliance with the institutional status and the political guidance necessary to pursue its goals in promoting intercultural dialogue, understanding and respect among civilizations, cultures, religions and beliefs.

7. The present report is the eighth annual report of the High Representative to the Secretary-General. It highlights the main activities of the Alliance during the period from July 2014 to December 2015.

II. Overview of progress

8. The Alliance of Civilizations has become a leading United Nations platform for intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation. It has connected Governments, international organizations, media, young people, faith-based

organizations, lawmakers, local authorities, civil society organizations and individuals devoted to promoting understanding across diverse communities.

9. Under the leadership of the High Representative, during the reporting period, the Alliance expanded its network of relationships with Member States, regional and sub-regional international organizations and other non-State actors. In many cases, the relationships were formalized through memorandums of understanding.

10. During the reporting period, memorandums of understanding were signed with Coventry University, the Academy of Latinity, the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Science, the Russian International Affairs Council and the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. A working agreement was also signed with the Universal Peace Federation.

11. The High Representative has been fully committed to growing the size of the Group of Friends. As at 31 December 2015, the Group comprised 145 members, including 118 Member States, the State of Palestine and 26 international organizations. The most recent countries to join are Benin, Eritrea and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has also become a member.

12. During the reporting period, the Alliance continued to promote the use of regional and national approaches, adopted by the members of the Group of Friends, to advance its goals.

13. Since the endorsement of the strategic review document for 2013-2018 at the ministerial meeting of the Group of Friends in September 2013, the programmatic activities of the Alliance have been reviewed and consolidated whenever their design and programme framework allowed it.

14. Throughout the reporting period, the Alliance developed its projects and programmes based on the principles provided in the report of the High-Level Group for the Alliance of Civilizations and its four pillars of action and reflecting the concepts provided through the strategic review process and the strategic review document and plan for 2013-2018. For example, the PLURAL+ youth video festival reflected a clear link among all fields of action. This film festival has expanded around the world, serving as a platform for young people's videos on migration, diversity and social exclusion. The summer school combined two focus areas, namely, education and youth. The same applies to Entrepreneurs for Social Change, the Intercultural Innovation Award and training events organized through media and migration programmes. Alumni of the fellowship programme were engaged to work on two themes, migration and youth. The media-friendly glossary on migration resulted in a significant initiative aimed at countering language of hatred and mistrust and raising awareness on the importance of language in the media and its impact on migrants in order to foster social inclusion and integration.

15. On funding, the overall situation remained stable but, as described in my previous report, neither the amounts nor the timing of replenishments to the Voluntary Trust Fund were adequate. The development of an effective replenishment mechanism remains an important and ongoing challenge for the Alliance. While some Member States have continued to provide support, either for core costs or for specific project activities, the overall level continues to leave the Alliance in a vulnerable position.

III. Consolidating the Alliance of Civilizations as a global multi-stakeholder platform

Advocacy and outreach by the High Representative

16. During the reporting period, the High Representative held bilateral consultations with both sponsors, Spain and Turkey, in addition to other Member States, including Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Benin, China, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iraq, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, the Sudan, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and the Holy See. The High Representative also met with representatives and officials of international organizations, including the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). He also met with representatives from a wide variety of civil society organizations.

17. Relations and partnerships were also established or strengthened with universities and research institutes, including Fordham University, Yale University, Long Island University and the Library of Alexandria.

18. The High Representative advocated for the purposes and goals of the Alliance at a wide range of events relating to interfaith and intercultural dialogue, peace and security, youth and education, and sustainable development, which were organized in collaboration with non-State actors, international organizations and civil society.

19. Among the events relating to religious dialogue, the High Representative participated in a meeting entitled "United Against violence in the name of religion: protecting religious and cultural diversity in Iraq and Syria" hosted by the Vienna-based King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in November 2014, in Vienna, where he delivered a message on behalf of the Secretary-General recalling the moral responsibility to protect all civilians affected by the Syrian conflict, regardless of their religion or ethnic affiliation.

20. In December 2014, the Alliance attended a meeting in Abu Dhabi on rejecting violent religious extremism and advancing shared well-being. The event was co-organized by Religions for Peace and the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies and aimed at facilitating alliances to counter violent extremism.

21. In November 2014, the Alliance, in partnership with Pax Romana, held a symposium at United Nations Headquarters on the protection of religious minorities worldwide, at which the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat and the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide highlighted the importance of respecting the rights of minorities and principles of non-discrimination, which are inherent to the Charter of the United Nations, various international treaties and conventions.

22. In March 2015, the Alliance participated in a debate on the relevance of interreligious and inter-civilizational dialogue to the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals held at Headquarters. The event was organized in collaboration with the Universal Peace Federation, the Permanent Observer for OIC to the United Nations and the Permanent Observer for the Holy See and served to reaffirm the

important role of religions and faith-based organizations as effective tools to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

23. In May 2015, the Alliance, in collaboration with the Government of Benin, launched the African Initiative on Education for Peace and Development through Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in Cotonou Benin. Through that cooperation, the Alliance reaffirmed its active involvement in promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue in Africa. The consensus document that emerged from the symposium, "Manifesto for Peace Education and Development through Inter-religious and Intercultural Dialogue", calls upon African people from different religious, spiritual, cultural, social and political backgrounds to promote dialogue and understanding.

24. In September 2015, the Alliance, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the Christian Democratic Union-Christian Social Union Parliamentary Group in the German Bundestag held an international conference on multilateral efforts to promote freedom of religion or belief. The event served as an opportunity for the Alliance to reaffirm the role played by parliamentarians and religious leaders in promoting religious freedom based on tolerance. The guests included Baroness Elizabeth Berridge, Member of the House of Lords at the United Kingdom Parliament; Hans-Gert Pottering, former President of the European Parliament and Chairman of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung; and Ivan Simonovic, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights.

25. On events relating to sustainable development, the Alliance participated in the World Family Summit+10 organized by the World Family Organization, the National Health and Family Planning Commission of China and the Zhuhai Municipal Peoples' Government, held in December 2014 in Zhuhai, China. The Summit celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the new Sustainable Development Goals.

26. On 22 September 2015, the Alliance participated in an event on building and promoting trust for peaceful and inclusive societies organized by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the Yale University Divinity School, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, the Permanent Missions of Algeria and Iraq to the United Nations and the United States Department of Homeland Security. At the event, it was outlined that it is only by combating socioeconomic inequalities and promoting the rule of law and good governance that violent extremism can be prevented.

27. In September 2014, the Alliance participated in a high-level panel discussion on the theme "Social harmony for sustainable development: promoting understanding and respect in a time of intolerance" organized by the Permanent Missions of Albania and Jordan to the United Nations and the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See, at Headquarters.

28. In October 2015, with the participation of the President of the Economic and Social Council, the Alliance held a Group of Friends ministerial meeting at Headquarters under the theme "Sustainable Development Goals and the Alliance of Civilizations", focusing on the role of the Alliance as a platform to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through cooperation, partnership and coordination at all levels.

29. In November 2015, the Alliance participated in the World Innovation Summit for Education, held in Doha, under the theme: "Investing for impact: Quality education for sustainable and inclusive growth". Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser, Chairperson of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, voiced her concern over rising attacks on education, in particular in conflict zones.

30. The Alliance works on many cross-cutting issues, including initiatives linking development, peace and culture. In December 2015, in partnership with the Global Millennium Development Foundation and SWW Creative, it hosted a special performance entitled "Michael Flatley's Lord of the Dance: living together in inclusive societies, celebrating peace and humanity through the power of dance and music" in New York. The event emphasized dance as an enabler of peace and social cohesion.

31. Regarding peace and dialogue, the Alliance participated in the conference "Europe and the Islamic world: there is more that unites us than divides us" in April 2015 in Brussels. The meeting was co-organized by the Association LINKS (Dialogue, Analysis and Research) and the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation and brought together politicians, diplomats, officials and civil society representatives from Europe and the Middle East. The necessity of preventing prejudices against minorities of any religious denominations was dominant in the debate.

32. On the critical issue of interreligious dialogue as a contributing factor in the prevention of violent extremism, the Alliance convened a high-level thematic debate on the theme "Promoting tolerance and reconciliation: fostering peaceful, inclusive societies and countering violent extremism", together with the Offices of the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session of the in April 2015. At the debate, the Alliance provided a platform for more than 19 religious leaders from a broad range of faiths from around the world to make recommendations on the best means of providing a narrative to counter violent extremism. It was an opportunity to actively engage and partner with, inter alia, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and the Policy and Mediation Division and Middle East and West Asia Division of the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat.

33. The Alliance also contributed to a conference on the theme "Pathways to peace: early childhood and families: how can we build an international agenda to invest in early childhood", held in June 2015 in Istanbul, Turkey and co-organized by the Mother and Child Education Foundation, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Yale University. At the event, the Alliance stressed the important role of parents and educators in teaching peace and tolerance to children at the earliest possible age.

34. Among initiatives on culture, the Alliance participated in the "World Tourism Organization/United Nations Scientific, Educational and Cultural Organization World Conference on Tourism and Culture: Building a New Partnership" held in February 2015 in Siem Reap, Cambodia. The conference was aimed at promoting dialogue and understanding across civilizations, in particular through culture, tourism and migration.

35. In October 2105, the High Representative, together with the Secretary-General, celebrated the power of music in building bridges of understanding by attending a musical performance by the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra led by Daniel Barenboim in the Human Rights and Alliance of Civilizations Room at the United Nations Office at Geneva.

36. The Alliance also participated in various international events organized under the auspices of the United Nations, including the third celebration of the International Day of Happiness, which was proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 66/281 during the tenure of Mr. Al-Nasser as President of the Assembly. The event was held on 20 March 2015 at Headquarters in New York and co-organized by the Permanent Mission of Sao Tome and Principe to the United Nations, in collaboration with Ambassador Hamid Al-Bayati, former Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations.

37. The High Representative participated in the eighth summit meeting of the Global Forum for Migration and Development, in Istanbul in October 2015, which was attended by nearly 600 delegates from 150 countries and 30 international organizations. He delivered keynote remarks at the opening ceremony, along with the Prime Minister of Turkey, Ahmet Davutoğlu. He also took part in a panel entitled "Beyond xenophobia and exclusion: local partnerships and action for the social inclusion of migrants and the diaspora".

38. On International Migrants Day, 18 December 2015, the Alliance joined the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in celebrating the positive contributions of migrant communities. The High Representative joined the Director General of IOM, William Lacy Swing, and the Deputy Secretary-General, Jan Eliasson, in the opening session.

39. The Alliance presented its work and impact on improving public perceptions of migrants and migration through effective communication channels, tools and messages in April 2015 in Geneva at the thematic meeting of the Global Forum on the role of communications in promoting widespread recognition of the benefits of migration, improving public perceptions of migrants, combating discrimination and promoting integration.

Group of Friends and focal points

40. The Group of Friends continued to provide guidance on key issues and strategic directions of the Alliance through bilateral consultations and group discussions. As at 31 December 2015, the Group of Friends consisted of 144 members (118 countries and 26 international organizations). The Group met twice at the Permanent Representative level in New York, in February and June 2015. Ministerial level meetings were held in New York in September 2014 and October 2015, focusing on the themes "New and emerging ideological threats to global peace and co-existence" and "Sustainable Development Goals and their relevance to the work of the Alliance of Civilizations" respectively.

41. The High Representative continued his efforts to broaden the composition of the Group of Friends community by inviting States that are not yet members of the Group to observe deliberations held during the Alliance's events.

42. Members of the Group of Friends have designated focal points that oversee the implementation of the Alliance's objectives and coordinate with the Secretariat. By

31 December 2015, 84 countries and 22 international organizations had designated focal points.

43. Preparations are currently under way to convene the annual meeting of the focal points in New York in January 2016, focusing on the theme "Building trust: the nexus to preventing violent extremism". The meeting will also serve as an opportunity to brief the focal points on the Alliance's ongoing programme and financial status, as well as the upcoming seventh Global Forum of the Alliance, to be held in Baku.

44. In an effort to facilitate more frequent information-sharing between the Alliance and the focal points, the Secretariat began publishing quarterly newsletters featuring updates on the Alliance's projects, institutional developments, political-level international appearances of the High Representative and forthcoming events and opportunities, including project-related calls for applications.

National and regional strategies

45. National strategies reflect a commitment by countries to generate an internal process for ownership of the goals of the Alliance. Moreover, they are a mechanism to exchange lessons learned regarding cultural diversity and challenges, including identity-based tensions.

46. To date, 28 Member States have submitted national strategies; however, no additional national strategies were submitted during the reporting period. The Alliance has also called upon groups of countries facing shared challenges to generate common actions through the creation of regional strategies. Thus far, regional strategies have been adopted for the Mediterranean region, South-Eastern Europe and Latin America. The League of Arab States adopted the Unified Arab Strategy for Dialogue of Civilizations.

Public-private partnerships

47. In 2014, the Alliance of Civilizations increased its cooperation with the private sector, which is a source of assistance that could augment the contributions of Member States. During the reporting period, the Alliance expanded its partnerships with the private sector, as illustrated by its collaboration with the BMW Group.

48. In September 2013, the Alliance signed a partnership agreement with the BMW Group for 2014-2015, through which they provide each other with expertise, time and resources to ensure the sustainable growth of each supported project. The extension of the agreement for 2016-2017 is in process.

49. In 2013, the Alliance established a partnership with EF Education First, a Swiss company that is a global leader in the field of language teaching and student exchanges. Through that partnership, the Alliance expanded its summer school project and was able to move it to New York for the first time, in August 2013. The agreement with EF Education First has been extended through the end of 2015.

Strengthening links within the United Nations system

50. Since the High Representative started his tenure, interactions with the various entities of the United Nations system have increased. During the reporting period, stronger institutional relationships were developed and activities carried out in

partnership with other United Nations departments, services, agencies, funds and programmes. The entities previously identified as key partners within the United Nations system, namely, the Department of Political Affairs (especially the Policy and Mediation Division and the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force), the Peacebuilding Support Office (Policy, Planning and Application Branch), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the United Nations Population Fund, continued to develop their relationships with the Alliance.

51. During the past year, the Alliance continued its engagement with the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, with a particular focus on the working group that works on youth and peacebuilding. Select youth project coordinators from the Alliance's Youth Solidarity Fund project continued to provide their guidance to the Alliance in respect of its participation in consultations at the United Nations on the work of the youth and peacebuilding group. Relationships with the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth were also strengthened during the reporting period.

Non-State and civil society network

52. In May 2015, the High Representative was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Cândido Mendes in Brazil, an educational institution led by Professor Cândido Mendes, a member of the High-level Group for the Alliance of Civilizations. He was recognized for his efforts to promote tolerance, peace and understanding.

53. The High Representative also met with representatives and officials of non-governmental organizations and civil society actors, such as the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung; the Global Cooperation Council; the United Nations International School; Religions for Peace International; the World Peace Prayer Society; Heavenly Culture, World Peace, Restoration of Light; Dalberg Global Development; and the Universal Peace Federation.

Global forums

54. Acting as a global platform, the Alliance convenes a periodic global forum at which its stakeholders and partners aim to advance the global conversation on building dialogue and understanding across cultures and religions. During the period 2008-2014, forums were organized in Madrid; Istanbul; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Doha; Vienna; and Bali, Indonesia at the generous initiative of the host Governments of Spain, Turkey, Brazil, Qatar, Austria and Indonesia.

55. The sixth Global Forum was held in Bali in August under the theme "Unity in diversity: celebrating diversity for common and shared values". The breakout sessions of this first Global Forum to be held in Asia addressed global issues, including promoting harmony through interreligious and cross-cultural dialogue; the role of women in fostering understanding among cultures; youth participation in peacebuilding; fostering understanding through the power of sports, art, music and entertainment; harnessing the positive power of social media; social inclusion and migration: developments in respect of the post-2015 agenda; and the perception of migration and how to change the narratives about migrants.

56. The next Global Forum is scheduled to take place in Baku in April 2016 and will be hosted by the Government of Azerbaijan under the theme "Living together in inclusive societies: a challenge and a goal". Up to 4,000 participants representing State and non-State actors are expected to attend the Forum.

57. The Forum will be kicked off with a youth event. The two main plenary sessions will be dedicated to the themes "Platforms and partnerships for the prevention of violent extremism" and "Good practices in social inclusion". Breakout sessions will address issues relating to migration, multiculturalism, media, hate speech, the role of women and religious leaders in promoting peace, and global education, among others.

IV. Alliance of Civilizations initiatives and activities

A. Education field of action

Media and Information Literacy Initiative

58. The Alliance maintains a media and information literacy clearinghouse (milunesco.unaoc.org), developed in partnership with UNESCO. It has become a unique thematic platform on media and information literacy within the United Nations system. In 2015, the clearinghouse was further developed by updating the multilingual and interactive version of the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers on the Alliance website (unesco.mil-for-teachers.unaoc.org/). Currently, the Alliance's media and information literacy clearinghouse has more than 6,000 subscribed users.

59. The Alliance developed another initiative in partnership with UNESCO, namely, "UNESCO-Alliance of Civilizations University Twinning", a global university network on media and information literacy and intercultural dialogue. In 2015, it grew regionally, thereby fulfilling the aim of creating a hub of networks for media and information literacy-related resources and initiatives. Currently, 15 universities around the world are actively participating in the initiative. The university network held its fourth Global Conference, hosted by Temple University in Philadelphia, United States in June 2015, at which its third publication, *Media and Information Literacy for the Sustainable Development Goals*, produced with support from the Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research was presented. The Network is planning its fifth Global Conference, for November 2016 at Sao Paulo University (Brazil).

60. In 2015, the Alliance continued to provide expertise and support to media and information literacy-related events. One of the symposiums in which Alliance staff participated was the Media Rise conference in Washington, D.C. Currently, the Alliance is finalizing the publication "Opportunities for Media and Information Literacy in the Middle East and North Africa", for which experts from 10 countries in the Middle East and North Africa region will provide input aimed at energizing the development of media and information literacy education in the region.

Fellowship programme

61. Between June 2014 and December 2015, the Alliance led two editions of the Fellowship programme. The Federal Foreign Office of Germany funded both

editions. Both years, the Alliance selected 12 civil society leaders from Europe and North America and 12 civil society leaders from the Middle East and North Africa. During two-week sessions, Fellows from each geographic area visited their counterparts' region and interacted with a wide range of local actors, with the purpose of developing a greater understanding of plurality by learning about each country's culture, politics, society, religion and media.

62. Countries visited in 2014 included Finland, Germany, Jordan, Morocco, Qatar and the United States of America and, in 2015, Fellows visited Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Egypt, Germany, Morocco, Qatar and the United States. Participants in the 2014 edition were from Algeria, Belarus, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Germany, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, Morocco, Poland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States, Yemen and the State of Palestine. In 2015, Fellows were from Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Canada, Egypt, France, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Norway, Tunisia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

63. In 2015, the activities of the Fellowship programme were built around the theme "Migration and integration" for participants from the Middle East and North Africa travelling to Europe and the United States and "Youth development" for their Western counterparts travelling to Egypt, Morocco and Qatar. The rationale behind the addition of a theme was to provide a substantive focus for participants in the programme. In 2016, the theme chosen will be common to both cohorts and will be "Education as a tool to prevent radicalization and xenophobia".

64. In 2015, for the first time since the launch of the Fellowship programme in 2010, the two cohorts had the opportunity to meet with one another in Sarajevo, a city at the historical crossroads between the East and the West. Fellows unanimously described the meeting as one of the highlights of their experience. The goal of the meeting was to encourage immediate dialogue between the Fellows of both groups.

B. Media and migration fields of action

#SpreadNoHate initiative

65. Media organizations play a crucial role in the public's perceptions of migrants and refugees and in their integration within host societies. Negative portrayals of migrants, refugees and minority groups lead to mistrust, hate, marginalization and exclusion. To address that issue, the Alliance launched the #SpreadNoHate initiative with a one-day symposium at the United Nations in New York in December 2015, at which participants examined the different measures taken globally to counter hate speech. They also explored the reasons why hate speech remains a pervasive element contributing to violent extremism, and the link between hate speech and the treatment of migrants.

66. During the symposium, both the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, Cristina Gallach, and the High Representative stressed that the "loudspeakers for hate" have been amplified with the explosion of new means of communication, such as social media. The day's discussions included 20 panellists, including United Nations officials and non-State actors and speakers. In addition, the hate speech symposium reached more than

7 million people on the day of the symposium and its hashtag #SpreadNoHate was trending in New York.

67. The second #SpreadNoHate discussion will take place in Baku at the seventh Global Forum, in April 2016. This panel discussion will serve as an opportunity to continue the dialogue on hate speech in the media, with a new set of media practitioners and professionals providing their own insights on the issues. Panellists will assess the hate speech phenomenon and its different manifestations, especially on social media platforms, which have provided ideal ground for increasing both the volume and the intensity of hateful language and propaganda.

68. These #SpreadNoHate discussions will be followed by a series of international symposiums in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa region and Asia in 2016-2017. The initiative also consists of a social media campaign (#SpreadNoHate), and a report to be published at the end of the cycle with a set of concrete policy recommendations.

PLURAL+ youth video festival

69. PLURAL+ is a youth video festival focused on migration, diversity and social inclusion, implemented by the Alliance in close cooperation with IOM. To date, this activity has been supported by 27 partner organizations through in-kind resources and expertise, as well as the distribution of PLURAL+ videos across the globe.

70. In 2014, 175 applicants from 54 countries submitted videos, of which 28 received awards. In 2015, 238 videos from 63 countries were received and 25 videos received awards. In 2014 and 2015, the PLURAL+ festival and awards ceremony took place in December at the Paley Centre for Media in New York. PLURAL+ international jury award winners were invited to participate in the event.

71. From July 2014 to December 2015, PLURAL+ award-winning videos were shown on a variety of platforms across the world, including broadcasts in Latin America and Europe and screenings in Belgium, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Egypt, France, India, Italy, Jordan, Morocco, the Republic of Korea, Serbia, Spain, Turkey and the United States. PLURAL+ award-winning videos have been streamed over 1 million times through different Internet platforms (YouTube, Vimeo, etc.).

72. The Alliance, with support from the Alexander Soros Foundation, produced multilingual (Arabic, English, French and Spanish) PLURAL+ discussion guides to serve as resources for educators wishing to include the discussion of PLURAL+ videos in their formal or informal educational settings.

AppPEACE

73. In August 2014, the Alliance, in partnership with UNDP, launched appPEACE, a global competition that provides an opportunity to identify and promote applications and video games developed to facilitate intercultural understanding and encourage the prevention of identity-based violent conflicts. Five winners, from Australia, Brazil, Germany, Kenya and Switzerland were selected from the 100 applications received. AppPEACE winners received mentorship and technical support to improve their apps and games and were invited to present their work at the "Build peace: peace through technology" conference, held in Cyprus in April 2015.

C. Youth field of action

Youth Solidarity Fund

74. In December 2014, the Alliance launched the fourth edition of the Youth Solidarity Fund through an open call for applications targeting youth-led organizations based in Asia, the Middle East, North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. The Alliance selected 11 youth-led organizations to receive a grant of up to $25,000 and technical support to implement projects that advance the Alliance's mandate of promoting long-term constructive relationships among people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.

75. The first group of projects, from organizations based in Asia, started activities in July 2015 and continued through November 2015. The second group of selected projects, from organizations based in the Middle East, North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, is implementing activities in 2016. The Governments of Australia and Finland provided financial support for the projects.

76. In the first group, six projects were implemented, in India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan and Tajikistan, targeting young adults between the ages of 18 and 35. A broad range of approaches were used, including arts, multimedia, community protection groups and peace education, to deal with issues related to easing identity-based tensions, promoting interfaith harmony and community resilience, empowering young people in transition settings and developing young people's skills in critical thinking, non-violent conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

77. The projects were implemented in areas that are currently affected or have recently been affected by tensions and violent conflict. They were output-oriented and aimed at ensuring that their products, including brochures, manuals, textbooks and leaflets, would be available for the benefit of the local community beyond the project duration. Furthermore, whenever applicable and relevant, partnership agreements between youth-led organizations and other partners were concluded in an effort to institutionalize relations and bring more ownership and sustainability to the projects.

78. From July to November 2015, more than 7,500 people directly benefited from projects supported through the Youth Solidarity Fund. The project beneficiaries attended workshops or training sessions and directly engaged in the production of manuals, books, art pieces, awareness-raising and other training activities. At the same time, up to 23,000 young people and adults became indirect beneficiaries of the projects, receiving awareness-raising materials, and attending exhibits, screenings and theatrical performances, as well as presentations by youth project beneficiaries.

79. The Alliance provided technical support to youth-led organizations, addressing questions that ranged from reporting requirements and adjustments to the workplan to the financial management of grants and ways to enhance the impact of the project in the local community. The technical support also included the review of the materials and substantive documents produced under each project. In addition, consultations were held and advice provided for project coordinators, in order to adapt project planning, content and approaches.

80. In November and December 2015, the Alliance's staff conducted monitoring and evaluation visits to select locations where Youth Solidarity Fund projects were

being implemented, with a view to observing, providing guidance and measuring progress made towards the attainment of project goals. Staff held informational interviews with project coordinators and management, beneficiaries of projects and relevant stakeholders on such themes as project relevance, feasibility, outputs, outcomes, impact, effectiveness, reporting and the financial value of their projects.

81. The visits allowed Alliance officers to better capture the story of the projects and the people behind them, including lessons learned and their future prospects. This segment proved useful in initiating an assessment of which topics could be included in a follow-up capacity-building training event with the alumni organizations of the Fund.

Entrepreneurs for social change

82. Following the 2014 and 2015 editions of the project "Entrepreneurship for social change", conducted in partnership with Fondazione CRT and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy, the initiative came to a successful conclusion.

83. The overall goal of the project was to empower young people to reduce marginalization and build inclusive societies through social enterprises. This goal contributed to the overall aim of fostering socioeconomic development in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The project included three main components: a week-long training programme tackling both conflict prevention and business planning and management; a nine-month period of mentoring by experts in the field; and an online platform for exchanges with peers and potential partners.

84. Both in 2014 and 2015, 20 young social entrepreneurs participated in the programme, aspiring to create positive social change in their communities by reducing tensions linked to cultural and religious diversity while also generating employment. They were selected through an open call for applications, which was launched in the summers of 2014 and 2015.

Alliance of Civilizations-EF Education First summer schools

85. The summer school project, developed in 2013 in partnership with EF Education First, focuses on peace education and youth empowerment. Through capacity-building and experiential learning, the project is aimed at strengthening the intercultural knowledge and competence of the participants and increasing the ability of these young people from civil society to collaboratively address pressing global challenges within the context of cultural and religious diversity. During a one-week session, participants live on campus and interact in an environment that fosters diversity of knowledge, experiences and perspectives, as well as mutual learning.

86. In August 2014, the Alliance continued its partnership with EF Education First to hold a summer school programme entitled "Youth for change" in Tarrytown, United States. A total of 75 young people, working in 75 countries, were selected to participate, including in workshops, round tables, dialogue circles, site visits and collaborative work. A total of 30 speakers, trainers and facilitators contributed to the programme with sessions on, inter alia, negotiation, theatre for social change and social entrepreneurship.

87. In line with the Alliance's approach of recognizing youth expertise in peacebuilding and social transformation, 50 per cent of the selected trainers and

facilitators were aged between 18 and 35 years. The programme also included interactive sessions with United Nations senior officials: the Deputy Secretary-General, the High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth.

88. According to the evaluation survey, almost all of the participants indicated that the content of the summer school had helped to improve their skills and knowledge, primarily in respect of fostering diversity and global citizenship, reducing stereotypes and identity-based tensions, promoting intercultural harmony and social justice, social entrepreneurship, advocacy, negotiation and organizational sustainability. In their feedback, participants also noted that the range of cultures, professional and personal experiences, academic backgrounds and faiths of the training team was an asset to the curriculum, allowing for more perspectives and a more comprehensive set of solutions to be explored.

89. In June 2015, the Alliance held a third summer school in partnership with EF Education First in Tarrytown. A total of 75 young people from 75 countries were selected to participate. They took part in a curriculum that included a combination of core plenary sessions and a set of optional modules, allowing participants to focus on key areas of interest ranging from social entrepreneurship to design thinking and non-violent community organizing. Participants also took part in dialogue circles, site visits, collaborative work and team-building activities, all of which contributed to reducing stereotypes, encouraging partnerships and reflecting on how to address challenges in peacebuilding.

90. Key highlights of the programme were the visit to United Nations Headquarters, where the Secretary-General addressed the participants, and a keynote address by, and conversation with, the High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations and the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide.

91. Building on the experience from the previous year, the Alliance continued its model of an intergenerational and diverse training team, with trainers from 15 different countries. Following the evaluation survey, all participants estimated that their skills had improved and 97 per cent were satisfied with the opportunities provided by the summer school to grow their professional networks.

D. Social innovation

Intercultural Innovation Award

92. In 2011, the Alliance and the BMW Group launched the BMW Group Award for Intercultural Innovation, in support of the Alliance of Civilizations, under the auspices of the United Nations, otherwise known as the Intercultural Innovation Award. The Award is given to innovative and sustainable projects around the world that encourage dialogue, promote intercultural understanding and contribute to prosperity and peace.

93. During a ceremony within the framework of the sixth Global Forum, held in Bali in 2014, the Government of Indonesia, the Alliance of Civilizations and the BMW Group awarded 11 grass-roots projects by people from Australia, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Germany, India, Italy,

Lebanon, Rwanda, Sweden and the United States, dealing with issues relating to young people, migration and integration, intercultural awareness, gender, education, arts, media and informational technology.

94. In addition to a total prize pool of $103,000, the Alliance provided technical support to the awardees, including training and capacity-building programmes, customized support and mentoring, recognition, visibility and membership. More specifically, three capacity-building workshops were organized, in Munich, (Germany), Spartanburg (United States) and Sao Paolo (Brazil), covering topics relating to strategy and planning, public speaking, fundraising, monitoring, evaluation and social media, among others.

95. Impact was measured through an assessment exercise. It was noted that one year after winning the Award, all 11 organizations had consolidated their work and considerably expanded their operations. A total of 31 organizations had received an award by the end of 2015. The number of countries impacted by the work of the awarded organizations increased by 151 per cent (from 39 to 98); similarly, the beneficiaries increased to over a million.

96. In May 2015, the Alliance launched a new application process, as a result of which more than 950 applications were received from 120 countries covering all continents. The applications were assessed by an international jury of experts and results will be presented at the seventh Global Forum, to be held in Bakuin April 2016.

E. Alumni programming

97. As recommended in the strategic review document for 2013-2018, beneficiaries of the Alliance's programmes in the areas of youth, the media, education, migration and cross-sector initiatives should be brought together in one network to share expertise, develop joint projects and maximize the impact of their work aimed at fostering cross-cultural understanding and cooperation.

98. In December 2013, the Alliance and its partner, the BMW Group, launched an online platform entitled "Intercultural leaders". The platform is designed to allow Alliance alumni to share knowledge and tools and interact in a live format. As at December 2015, close to 400 alumni of PLURAL+, the Intercultural Innovation Award, the Youth Solidarity Fund, the Fellowship programme, the Entrepreneurs for Social Change project and the Alliance-EF Education First summer school programme, as well as professionals from partner organizations and a group of 80 mentors, had joined the network, with a ratio of five members per mentor.

99. The Alliance and the BMW Group hosted the first meeting of the Intercultural Innovation Award Alumni, in Berlin in November 2015, in which 13 alumni participated, representing the three editions of the Award that have occurred since 2011. The alumni participated in a learning exchange during which every attendee had the opportunity to share experiences while exploring possibilities for collaboration. In addition, they had the opportunity to meet Alliance Fellows and exchange ideas on promoting respect for multiculturalism.

100. The Alliance organized two events with Fellowship alumni in 2015. In July, 12 alumni met in Milan, Italy during the World Fair to offer good practices on the use of cultural diplomacy as a tool to build bridges among people. In December, 15

alumni met in New York to reflect collectively on how to engage local communities, civil society organizations and grass-roots initiatives in the prevention of radicalization and xenophobia.

V. Outreach and communications

101. The Alliance's outreach and communication strategy was primarily developed through its website and the projects and initiatives implemented worldwide. Following the official missions of the High Representative, keynote statements, lectures, interviews and videos are published on the website.

102. The Alliance also issued quarterly editions of its newsletter during the reporting period and widely shared it among its main stakeholders, including Member States, international organizations and other partners. The newsletter features policy initiatives and international advocacy events, latest developments under programmes, institutional decisions and partnerships concluded, as well as various opportunities for partners and the public at large and forthcoming activities.

103. The Alliance has worked actively on engaging its followers on Facebook and Twitter, while also expanding its efforts with the recent creation of four new accounts, on Instagram, Google+, LinkedIn and Snapchat. The number of the Alliance's followers has increased steadily and rapidly on all platforms, totalling more than 100,000 people.

104. The Alliance also regularly supports campaigns of other United Nations agencies, in particular when they pertain to its four main pillars. The Alliance continues to work actively on its digital communication strategies to maximize the visibility of its various programmes and activities and ensure maximum reach and greater impact. This work has proved successful, given that millions of people have been reached through the Alliance's social media efforts.

105. Periodic meetings of the Group of Friends convened in New York became open to civil society organizations and the media. They are webcast live through United Nations Television and Video, thereby increasing the Alliance's visibility and outreach within the United Nations system and beyond.

106. Furthermore, on various occasions, round-table discussions with journalists were organized to highlight the work and mission of the Alliance. Such activities were augmented through the regular press releases and media advisories sent by the Alliance media team through the network of United Nations accredited journalists and beyond.

VI. Governance: Voluntary Trust Fund and staffing

107. Notwithstanding the Alliance's crucial role and expanded activities, the resources at its disposal continued to be extremely limited and somewhat insufficient compared with the target level. In addition, financial resources are almost impossible to predict. During the reporting period, the trend of increasing earmarked contributions at the expense of non-earmarked contributions stopped, with 65 per cent of all contributions being non-earmarked.

108. Owing to an overall reduction in the level of contributions in the 2014 budgetary year, actual expenditures were reduced to $3.76 million. Figures for 2015 will be provided once they are available.

109. Staffing remained constant during the reporting period. Funding limitations require that Alliance staff look for cost savings wherever possible.

110. The High Representative is in the process of developing a concept for an advisory council. This will include individuals from the policy, religious, academic, business and arts/entertainment worlds. The council will have the mandate to advise the High Representative on all issues relating to the mandate of the Alliance. It is expected that he will announce its formation at the upcoming seventh Global Forum, to be held in Baku in April 2016.

VII. Conclusion

111. During the reporting period, the High Representative continued his efforts to expand on the visibility of the Alliance of Civilizations, reflecting on his own experiences and advocating for the causes consistent with the mandate of the Alliance. At the same time, staff continued to implement project activities, further developing existing successful projects and creating new ones. The dynamic process of project development will continue into the future as a practical expression of the concepts that lie at the foundation of the Alliance.

112. The Alliance of Civilizations has increasingly become a regular contributor to the work of the United Nations Secretariat and continues its ongoing integration into Headquarters structures. That process will lead to even greater cooperation between the Alliance and United Nations system entities in 2016.

113. The Alliance continues to seek adequate, regular, reliable and predictable sources of replenishment to its Voluntary Trust Fund. While efforts to improve relationships with the private sector are made, the Alliance must also be regularly supported by the Member States. Private sector funding can only augment, not replace, the support of Member States.